

7. FOLKSONG

A GREAT deal of folksong and ballad is current among the people of the Karnataka. The earliest poetry in any language is of course folksong. Kven when poetry has become an affair of the lettered the folk poet does not cease to sing; he is the people's voice and his song is endless. If the best thought in the country finds expression in the language of the people and the work is taken to their ears by public reading, recitation and narrative, the poetic sense of the people is naturally stimulated. In such a case the folk poet gains rather than loses by growth of letters in the land. In the Kannada country to-day one can hear cartmen as they drive along the road, the cow-herd boy tending cattle, or the agriculturist drawing water up from the well for his crops, singing as they attend to their work. Frequently there will come into the village a *jogi* who can sing snappy verse with just a touch of impropriety, a verse tale setting forth a popular version of the adventures of epic heroes, or a devotional song speaking of Siva and Parvati or Rama and Sita. Some villages have folk-theatres staging long versions of old stories written by a local bard. Women sing when doing their household "work songs of the Saiva or Vaishnava saints or songs like theirs written by some layman. The young mother sends her child to sleep by crooning some simple lullaby which she perhaps learnt by hearing from her mother when tier-

self a baby. It is perhaps the song to which
that mother